

See, I believe that millions in the Middle East want liberty, that in their silence, they want there to be a free society. I believe women in the greater Middle East long to be able to realize their hopes and aspirations in a free society. I believe in freedom. I believe in the transformational power of liberty because freedom is not America's gift to world, see? That's not what I'm telling you. I believe in the transformational power of liberty because freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and women in this world.

This young century will be liberty's century. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we'll build a safer world and a more hopeful America. By reforming our systems of Government, we will help more people in our country realize their dreams. We will spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of the country. We will pass the enduring values of our country on to a new generation. We will continue to lead the cause of freedom and peace.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that make this a great nation.

None of us—none of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." You know, I'm doing my best to console these—thank these folks that had been in the rubble looking for a buddy. A guy grabbed me by the arm, he looked me right in the eye, and he said, "Don't let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, when I traveled your beautiful State asking for the vote, I made a pledge that said if I—if you gave me the chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here. Now you can tell them a sitting President came to St. Cloud, Minnesota. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:47 a.m. at Dick Putz Field. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the Republican National Convention; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; country music entertainer John Stone; Lt. Col. Joe Repya, USA (Ret.), Bush-Cheney '04 Minnesota Veterans Co-Chair; John Gagliardi, head football coach, St. John's University; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in a Discussion on Health Care in Blaine, Minnesota

September 16, 2004

The President. Thank you all for being here today. Pleased be seated. Please be seated. We got some work to do here. I'm here to ask for your vote; that's what I'm doing today. I'm here to ask for your help. I believe everybody has the duty to vote in America, and I'm asking that you register your friends and neighbors, encourage them to do their duty in democracy. And while you're out registering people to vote, make sure you don't overlook discerning Democrats—you know, people like Zell Miller. And then after you register them to vote—I know a lot of you are working hard in the grassroots here—as you register them to vote and election time comes upon us, head them to the polls. And then when you head them to the polls, say, "If you want a stronger America, a safer America, and a better America, put Dick Cheney and me back into office."

What a great place to spend the day, the great State of Minnesota. I tell you, what a fantastic bus trip we're having. Just had a sandwich in Anoka, the Halloween capital of America. And I started my morning in St. Cloud. Actually, I didn't start my morning in St. Cloud. I started my morning at the White House. And I said to Laura, "I'm heading to Minnesota." She said, "Well, tell everybody hello." So I am. The First Lady sends her best.

This is a true story—kind of true. [*Laughter*] It may have been slightly embellished at times. [*Laughter*] So I said, “Laura, will you marry me?” She said, “Fine.” She was a public school librarian, by the way. And she said, “I’ll marry you, just so long as I don’t have to give a political speech.” [*Laughter*] I said, “Okay.” Fortunately, I didn’t—she didn’t hold me to that promise. America got to see a fabulous mom, a great wife, and a wonderful First Lady in New York City. I’m really proud of Laura.

Today, at the end of this interesting dialog we’re going to have on a lot of issues, we’re going to focus mainly on health. We’ve got some citizens from the area here who are going to discuss different aspects of the health care plan we have, so you can better understand why I believe our plan is the best. But at the end of this, I hope you’ll find there’s a reason why I’m running again, that I have a reason to seek the vote, that I have a vision for this country that is one that will make the world a safer place and a better country for all of us.

And I just got off the phone with the FEMA Director, Mike Brown, who’s down in the Southeast. And as you know, Hurricane Ivan hit the coast very hard. The States of Mississippi and Louisiana, most particularly Alabama and Florida, were hit hard. And I know the citizens of that part of the world will be glad to hear that people in the great State of Minnesota are praying for their safety, praying for their lives.

I’m running with a good man in Dick Cheney. I’m proud of my runningmate. Now, listen, I admit it—I admit that he doesn’t have the waviest hair in the race—[*laughter*]—kind of like old Weber. I didn’t pick him for his hairdo. [*Laughter*] I picked him because of his experience, his judgment, and he can get the job done.

I’m proud of your Governor. You’ve got a great Governor in Tim Pawlenty. He’s an innovator. He’s a good thinker. He’s got a pretty good sense of the politics here in the State. He told me something on the bus. He said, “You know something, Mr. President, you’re going to carry Minnesota.” And I believe him. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Okay. All of us in the political arena love applause, but we’ve got work to do here today.

I’ve got something I want to share with you. I’ve got some things on my mind I want to tell you. Before I do, I also want to thank my friend Mark Kennedy, Congressman Mark Kennedy. You’ve got to put this guy back in office. He’s a great United States Congressman. He has earned your support, and I’m looking forward to working with him in my second term as President of the United States. We’ve got a great relationship. I think it’s important to have a Congressman who can call over to the White House and the President answer the phone. I’ll answer Kennedy’s calls. I want to thank Debbie, his wife, Debbie. She is a—Kennedy is a smart guy. He sends the better half the family out to campaign on his behalf. Thank you, Debbie, for working hard.

Jimmy Ramstad—Congressman—I appreciate you, Congressman. Thanks for coming. Proud you’re here. I’m honored to—I mentioned Zell Miller a while ago. He’s a strong, strong citizen.

You know, Randy Kelly is as well. I am proud that the mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota—[*applause*]—thank you. I’m proud to call him friend and supporter. There are a lot of people just like him out there that wonder about the future of this country. They forget all the political noise, and they’re looking at vision. That’s what they want. They want somebody who can lead this country to a better tomorrow. Mr. Mayor, I’m honored to have your support. I’ll treasure it.

I appreciate Vin Weber being here. Thank you for coming, Vin, former Congressman. I want to thank all the State and local folks who are here. Thanks for serving your State and your cities and counties.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists for what you have done and, more importantly, what you’re going to do. We’re coming down the stretch. Now is the time to be getting on those phones and reminding people that we have a duty to vote. And I’m honored you do so. So when you tell them to vote, tell them that we’ve got a vision in this campaign for a safer world and a more hopeful America.

And a hopeful America really means that you’ve got to have an understanding that we’re living in changing times. Think about how the times have changed since our dads

and granddads were coming up. You know, in the old days a person would likely have one career, one job, and mom would be at home. And our society has changed significantly now. People have more than one career. Often, they change jobs several times. Women are now working in the home and outside the home in the workplace.

These are different times, and yet the systems of Government have not changed. Health plans need to change with modern times. The pension plans need to change with modern times. The Tax Code needs to change with modern times. The worker training programs need to change. The work rules need to change. The labor laws are old. They were written in the past. We need to be thinking about the future.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well, I'll tell you what I mean. Since a lot of women work outside the home, there ought to be flex-time and comp-time available for employees so that people can balance their needs of their family and the needs of the workplace. We need modern work rules.

Like the Social Security fund. If you're a senior citizen, you don't have a thing to worry about when it comes to getting your check. You know, I don't care what the political rhetoric tells you, the promise is going to be kept. The Social Security trust has got plenty of money to fulfill the promise for our seniors. And baby boomers like me and a couple of others I see here—[laughter]—we're in good shape when it comes to Social Security.

So we need to worry about our younger kids and our grandkids when it comes to Social Security. There's not enough—the demographics have changed. The Social Security trust is weak when it comes to our children and grandchildren. That's why I believe we ought to allow younger workers to take some of their own tax money and set up a personal savings account that will help them realize the promise of Social Security, a savings account they call their own, a savings account that Government cannot take away.

These are changing times. The nature of the jobs are changing in America. You know what I'm talking about. I mean, the health care industry, for example, is booming in parts of our country. I suspect it is in this

great State of Minnesota. You've got some of the great health care technologies in the world being developed here. But oftentimes there's a skills gap in America. In other words, the jobs exist, but the workers aren't trained for the jobs which exist.

And that's why I'm such a big believer in community colleges, to make sure that workers have got an opportunity to gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. Our worker training programs need to change to adapt to modern times so people can fulfill and realize their dreams here in this country. What I'm telling you is, one of the reasons I'm seeking the office is because I understand many of the systems of Government were designed for the past, and I think we need to change those systems to stand side by side with people so they can realize their dreams.

Our view of Government is that Government ought to help people realize their dreams. I'm running against a fellow who believes that Government ought to dictate to people, and that's a fundamental philosophical difference.

Now, I want to talk to you about our economy right quick, because we can change systems all we want; if people can't make a living, it's not going to matter, see. Now, I—as you're out gathering the vote, remind people what we have been through. This economy has been through a lot in a quick period of time.

We've been through a recession. As a matter of fact, the stock market started to correct—that means go down—5 months before we came to office. Then the recession came.

Then we had corporate scandals in America. And make no mistake about it, those corporate scandals hurt. They shook people's confidence. We passed tough laws now, and it's abundantly clear that this country will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

And then the terrorists attacked. And they estimate it cost us a million jobs in 3 months after September the 11th, 2001. But we're overcoming these obstacles. Our economy is growing. It's growing at a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. The unemployment rate in Minnesota is 4.8 percent. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. Let me put

that in perspective for you: 5.4 percent is lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

We're adding manufacturing jobs. People say, "Why do you think?" I say, "Well, I'll tell you why I think: One, our workers are great; two, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong; three, the farmers and ranchers know what they're doing; and four, we cut the taxes." The question is not what we did to overcome the obstacles. The question is, what are we going to do to keep the growth; what is the vision to make sure this economy continues to grow?

My vision is this: In order to keep jobs here in America, in order to make sure people can realize their dreams through working, America must be the best place in the world to do business. If you want to find work here, this needs to be a place where people are willing to risk capital and employers are willing to expand. That means this: Less regulations on small businesses; tort reforms so small-business owners aren't subjected to harassment in the courts; an energy policy which encourages conservation, uses technologies to come up with new ways to use and conserve energy; an energy policy which uses corn and soybeans in a wise way, with biodiesel and ethanol; an energy policy which encourages clean coal technology; an energy policy which uses latest technologies so we can explore wisely for natural gas. In order to keep jobs here in America and to keep this economy growing, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need to open up markets in order to keep jobs here in America. Listen, there is a tendency for people to say, "Well, I'm going to put policies out there that will isolate us from the world." That's called economic isolationism. That would be a big mistake for workers in the State of Minnesota. It would be a big mistake for Minnesota farmers. We've opened up our markets, and that's good for you. If you're a consumer and you have more product to choose from, you're likely to get the product you want at a better price and better quality. And so, what I say to places like China is, "You treat us the way we treat you." And I say that to not only China but elsewhere, because I believe America's small-business owners, entre-

preneurs, farmers, ranchers, workers can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level.

Before we talk about health care, I want to talk about another key issue, and that's what we do with your money. I believe that—I know we will continue to be wise with how we spend your money. In other words, to keep jobs here, Government has got to be wise with how the people—how the people's money is spent. That means setting priorities.

We set priorities in Washington. The priority is defending this country and supporting our troops in harm's way. That's a priority. We've increased Federal spending on education by 49 percent since I've been the President. We've got plenty of money to do what we need to do up there if we set priorities. You'll hear me talk a little bit about tax relief in a minute, but I—with one of our panelists here. But the whole philosophy is, is that after we've set priorities, I think the people can spend their money better than the Federal Government can. It's a philosophical difference—

Audience member. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Yes, sir, thank you. Okay. Now, the other issue is taxes. This is an issue in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who has promised over \$2 trillion of new money so far, and we're just coming down the stretch. It's easy to stand up in front of audiences and tell them what they want to hear in politics, believe me, particularly when you're spending somebody else's money. And the question is how he's going to pay for it.

And he's got that answer we've all heard before: "I'm going to pay for it by taxing the rich." Now, you've heard that before. Here's the problem. One, you cannot tax the rich enough to pay for over \$2.2 trillion in new spending, so there's a tax gap. And generally, when there's a tax gap, you get to fill it. Secondly, by running up the top two brackets in the Tax Code, you're taxing small businesses—ninety percent of small businesses pay individual income taxes, because they're classified as a Subchapter S or sole proprietorship. Ninety percent of the small businesses. Yet 70 percent of all new jobs are created by small businesses. So when you're

talking about running up the top two brackets, really what you're talking about is taxing the job creators here in America, and that's bad economic policy.

And finally, when you hear them say "tax the rich," be careful. The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason, because they don't want to pay. And you get stuck with the tab. But we're not going to let him stick you with the tab. We're going to carry Minnesota in November and win a great victory.

All right, let me talk about health care. The subject that we're going to focus on today is health care. We want health care to be available and affordable. We want people to be able to afford health care, and therefore, we need to be thinking about—need to deal with the rising cost of health care. And we want health care to be available. Here are some interesting ways to do so.

We're going to talk about Medicare in a minute, with Jerry. Do you realize that over half of the unemployed in America, working unemployed—uninsured, working uninsured, work for small businesses. Think about that. That means small businesses are having trouble affording health care. But over half are employed. And so one way to make sure that small businesses can afford health care is to allow them to pool risk so that they can purchase insurance at the same discounts that big businesses get to do.

Consumers will be protected under Federal law under this plan. It's a plan to help small businesses afford health care. That's what we want to do. We want to help them afford health care. Fifty percent of the people work for small businesses who are working uninsured. Why don't we help the small businesses?

I'll tell you another way to help small businesses afford health care. It's to do something about these junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine and running good docs out of business. This is an issue. See, I don't think you can be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. [*Laughter*] I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs and patients and hospitals. I support medical liability reform—now.

We need to promote health information technologies. My hope is that most Americans have a personal electronic health record within the next decade. That's a fancy way of saying that when you have a system where docs who can barely write—well, they can write; you just can't read it—handwrite every file, there's inefficiencies in the system. One way to help with health care costs is to modernize the health care industry. We've got a great project going on in Washington, DC, to bring technologies into the health care field. It's going to save money.

Another way to help save money is to promote generic drugs to the market more quickly. We are doing that in Washington, DC.

Let me talk real quick about a subject I know that is on your mind. I think it's important for me to tell you what I think about importation of drugs. Listen, we're studying the issue. I'll tell you why we're studying it. I don't want people bringing in drugs that will hurt our seniors, and neither do you. I know it sounds attractive to some, the importation of drugs. And it may work. But sure enough, if we're not careful, drugs manufactured in the Third World over which we have no control could use Canada as a way to get into this State, and then we've got a problem, a safety problem.

We have a duty in the Federal Government to protect the consumer. And so I've got the—I've got Tommy Thompson and his crowd looking to make sure that before we have an importation program, that you're safe, that we make sure that people are—have got a safe product that does what it says it will do.

And in the meantime, we're going to keep promoting the generic drugs quickly to the market place. And that will help hold down the cost of drugs. We're going to talk about another way to hold down the cost of drugs for seniors here in a minute.

Let me talk about, right quick, about what we call community health centers. And we've got—Peggy Metzger is with us today. She is a soldier in the army of compassion. Community health centers are—well, I'll let you explain. Where do you work?

Peggy Metzger. Thank you, Mr. President. Ladies and gentlemen, there is a story that

needs to be told, and it's about the frontline of health care happening every day by committed and dedicated doctors and nurses and other people at the grassroots level where it makes a difference. Were it not for the President's initiative, this would not be happening. The Cedar Riverside People's Center medical clinic might have closed its doors 3 years ago, after we'd been in service for over 30 years. Again, were it not for the President's vision, for his dedication and care that health care does get to the frontlines where it makes the biggest difference, we wouldn't be open today. So I want to thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Let me ask you some questions. So who shows up? Who is the clientele? When you open the door, who is likely to walk in the door at your community health center?

[Peggy Metzger, chief executive officer, Cedar Riverside People's Center, made further remarks.]

The President. What she's saying is—it just makes sense to me, otherwise I wouldn't be doing it. [Laughter] We're going to expand these community health centers so poor people have got a place to find primary care and preventative care. It makes a lot of sense. I think it's a wise use of your money to expand and increase the number of community health centers all across America. As a matter of fact, the goal I've set is every poor county in America has a community health center.

It's much better—it's much better if folks who need help get help at the community health center than in an emergency room of a local hospital. Not only do taxpayers save money, it's a more compassionate way to help people.

And the interesting thing about community health centers, the doctors who practice there are exempt from lawsuits because of Federal law. The problem is, is that since the trial lawyers are so strong in the Senate, we can't get any more liability protection than we've got. But at least your docs and you—

Ms. Metzger. We are protected, thank you.

The President. Yes, see, that's important. You've got people who are ob-gyns who feel comfortable about practicing there because

they're not going to get sued. It seems like if we're willing to extend legal liability to these health centers, we ought to be extending legal liability to private clinics and hospitals as well, so ob-gyns can do their job.

Ms. Metzger. It's such an honor to be here and to see the person who was able to see through the middle of the complexities and the confusion and the confounding situation with health care. And thank you for seeing through the middle and getting to the bottom line.

The President. Glad you're here. Good job. Pass that mike over there.

One of the things I went to Washington for is to fix problems. We had a problem in Medicare. I'll tell you why we had a problem in Medicare: Because medicine was changing, and Medicare didn't. Let me tell you what I mean. The Medicare system would pay for heart surgery, like \$100,000 worth—that's your money—and it wouldn't pay for the prescription drugs that would prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That didn't seem to make sense to me. It certainly wasn't very cost-effective, but more significantly, it wasn't very compassionate for our seniors. After all, we would like to prevent the heart surgery from needing to occur.

So I worked with Congress to change Medicare for the better, so seniors have got more options to choose from, so seniors, starting in 2006, will have prescription drug coverage. And by the way, in 2005, for the first time, Medicare is going to pay for screenings so that we can prevent disease from occurring now, rather than have to treat it later. That seems to make sense for taxpayers.

As we waited for the prescription drug coverage to kick in, we decided to send out prescription drug discount cards. If you're a poor senior, you get a \$600 credit per year for your card. Over 4 million seniors have signed up for the card. Interestingly enough, it's just not "a" card, there's a variety of programs from which the seniors can choose. You know why? I believe people ought to be making choices. I told you, the difference between what I believe and what others believe is that Government ought to stand side by side with people to improve their lives, not dictate to

their lives. If there's only one choice, it means the Government is dictating. If you've got choices to make, it means you've got a better chance of designing the program that fits your needs.

Jerry Markie is with us—aren't you? [Laughter] So he's here for a reason, because he's got a drug discount card. I want senior citizens in the State of Minnesota to hear this story because I think you're going to find it very interesting.

Ready to crank it up?

Jerry Markie. All set to go.

The President. All right, let's go.

[Mr. Markie made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, see, listen to what he's saying here. The cards—this is good use of—it seems like to me, good policy to enable this good man—I think he saved, like he told me, \$350 a month because he's using this discount card. This is just wise policy. It's a lot better policy to empower him than have the Government dictate to him, like my opponent would like to do.

[Mr. Markie made further remarks, concluding as follows.]

Mr. Markie. And that's the truth. If we didn't have the insurance card, we would be paying that out of pocket. And that amounts to \$4,200 a year. Just think of that.

The President. You can use that, can't you?

Mr. Markie. You betcha. That's a sizable—

The President. Take mom out to dinner more frequently.

Mr. Markie. More than once. [Laughter]

The President. That's right.

[Mr. Markie made further remarks.]

The President. I'll complete the thought—any time you can save money, that's good. [Laughter] Right?

Mr. Markie. Yes. You just talked about Celebrex. I have eight drugs. That's just one. We take the six, as I indicated. And you save—\$166—\$15, that's almost 150 bucks right there, per prescription.

The President. See, here's what we're talking about. We're talking about a health care vision that empowers people, that helps people. And that stands in contrast to a vision

that's going to increase the scope of the Federal Government. Now, listen to the debate in health care. I want our fellow citizens to listen carefully to the difference between the plan that I'm talking about and the plan my opponent is talking about.

I'll give you an example. He believes we ought to increase the amount of people covered by Medicaid. All that does is crowd out people who have got insurance plans through small businesses and move them from the private sector to the public sector. I just think that's the wrong decision to make, because once you're on the public sector, making decisions for you in health care, it means you and the doctor aren't making your decisions. It means unelected officials are making your decisions. Bureaucrats are deciding health care. The nationalization of health care would be wrong for the American citizen.

Let me tell you about a really interesting idea, an idea that has got a lot of advantages. They're called health savings accounts. We've got an owner of a health savings account with us, and he and I are going to explain to you how they work. And he's going to start. But this is Dan Kelly. He works for Mercury Office Supply. I just want you—as he explains how this works, I want you to think about a philosophy that says decisions will be made between doctors and patients and a philosophy that says, "We want people owning their own health care accounts, so that if they change jobs in this changing world, the health care account goes with them from one job to the next." And as they get older and accumulate savings tax-free in the health savings account, that asset becomes something they own and can pass on to another generation.

Danny Kelly, straight here from Mercury Office Supplies.

Daniel Kelly. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. How is the business?

Mr. Kelly. It's pretty good. It could be better, but—

The President. Good. Tell us how a health savings account works.

[Daniel J. Kelly, operations manager, Great River Office Products, doing business as Mercury Office Supply, made further remarks.]

The President. Yes, so, here's the way it works, again. He's got it going right. I'm just trying to add a little emphasis to it. He buys a high-deductible plan that says, for example—I guess yours is—the insurance pays for any cost over \$5,000.

Mr. Kelly. Yes, because it's a family plan.

The President. Which means the cost of that plan is significantly less costly than a regular insurance plan. He or his company, whoever pays for it, is out a lot less money for insurance. Then, if the deductible is \$5,000, the company and Dan put in \$5,000 pre-tax. And the \$5,000 earns money tax-free*. And the \$5,000, if you have to use it for routine medical expenses, comes out tax-free. And if you don't spend the \$5,000, it rolls over to the next year tax-free. So in other words, it's his money. Is that right?

Mr. Kelly. It's my money. I choose how I want to spend it.

The President. Say that again.

Mr. Kelly. I choose how I want to spend it. I choose the doctors. I choose the medicine, whatever I feel is best for my family. It's my choice.

The President. Yes, let me stop you there. Oh, not yet. [Laughter] See, the operative words, as far as I'm concerned, are, "I choose." See, it's not somebody in Washington choosing; it's not an HMO choosing. Danny says, "I choose. I make the choice." Now, if somebody makes a choice, there's a responsibility that comes with that. Think about this—this has got a built-in incentive, doesn't it, for right choices in life. I mean, for example, if you watch that money in your own account begin to dwindle, you may want to walk a little more on a daily basis—[laughter]—take to the foot in order to make yourself more healthy. In other words, there's kind of a preventative medicine built in to a plan when it says, "My money. I choose." In his case, he and the business contribute. The business pays for the entire premium on the—

Mr. Kelly. Correct, on half the deductible.

The President. —on the catastrophic care, and then you and the business share on the contributions on what goes into the account. This is an innovative plan. They're

beginning to spread across America. If you're a small-business owner, look into them. Fifty percent of the uninsured here in America who don't have health care work for small businesses. And so what I think we ought to do is help small businesses set up HSAs through tax credits. I think the working uninsured ought to be given direct tax credits to set up HSAs. I believe this product is going to help change medicine for the better, because it keeps the doctor and the patient in charge of health care decisions.

And guess what else about the—about Kelly's family that I think you'll find interesting is that—remember the tax relief I talked about earlier, that kind of got the economy going, I think—his family saved \$2,400 in '03 and \$2,400 in '04. Now, in the land where we're throwing around zeros like they don't matter—that would be Washington—that doesn't sound like a lot. It's a lot to this guy. How many kids have you got?

Mr. Kelly. I have three kids.

The President. Three. How old?

Mr. Kelly. One is—well, 11 months, one will be turning 3 tomorrow, and the other will be turning 5 in about another month.

The President. And what did you do with the money, the 2,400?

Mr. Kelly. Buy milk. [Laughter]

The President. Yes, good. He has a healthy baby, doesn't he? See, he's got extra money in his pocket. It could help meet the health savings accounts needs, so his family has got a health savings account that works. His money matters. Once Government meets its priorities, I believe families like the Kellys ought to have more of their own money. The \$2,400 tax relief mattered a lot, and Congress must make the tax relief permanent. Running up the taxes on the American people right now makes no sense. [Applause]

Okay, let me talk about one other subject. Thank you all. A couple of points I want to make. Changing times—in changing times, there are some things that aren't going to change. The values we try to live by won't change, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In changing times, we must support the institutions that give us stability, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. In changing times, we must not be afraid to call upon our faith institutions

* White House correction.

to help people who hurt. In changing times, we must stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts.

We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. I'm going to tell you one other thing: I will continue to appoint judges who know the difference between using the bench to write the law and strictly interpreting the law.

Now, I want to talk about one other subject. I'm just getting started here. *[Laughter]* I want to talk about how to make the world a safer place. I would like to share with you some of the lessons I learned from September the 11th. The first lesson I learned and I hope the country learned is that we're facing an enemy that has no conscience. It's an enemy that is just really hard for us to understand. They will kill like that in order to shake our will. You can't negotiate with these people. You can't try to sit down and have discussions with them. You can't—it's impossible to try to rationalize with them. And that's why we're using every asset at our disposal to find them around the world so we don't have to face them here at home.

That's the first lesson; that's our duty. That's the solemn duty of our Government, to protect the American people. I wish I wasn't giving this talk. We didn't ask for what happened, but we're darn sure going to respond to it, in order to protect the American people.

Secondly, this is a different kind of war, and it's important to understand that. It's a war in which the enemy will try to find a host nation so they can become an active parasite. And therefore, it's important for me to make clear a doctrine that says, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." *[Applause]*

Now, when the President says something—hold on for a minute—when the President speaks, he better mean what he says. I meant what I said. *[Applause]* Okay, hold on for a minute. Thank you. Hold on for a minute, got a lot of work to do.

And so the Taliban heard from us, and they rejected what our Government said, and they're no longer in power. A lot of brave Americans went in and did hard work and removed the Taliban. Let me explain what

happened as a result of that action. First, Al Qaida has no place to train in Afghanistan. Remember, they were training thousands of people—thousands—so they could burrow into societies, including our own, to create havoc.

Let me step back real quick. These are people—I would call them ideologues of hatred who use terror as a tool to intimidate. Their vision is backward. The Taliban—to indicate the kind of vision they have for the world, in Afghanistan young girls didn't get to go to school because of the Taliban. That's backward. Their moms would be taken into the public square and whipped if they didn't toe the line of the ideologues of hate.

Not only did we deal with the host that was providing safe haven for the parasite, Al Qaida, not only will they no longer train there, but 10 million citizens, 41 percent of whom are women, have registered to vote for the upcoming Presidential election in Afghanistan. It's amazing. Think about that. It's an amazing thought, isn't it? You remember a while back when—remember when the Taliban pulled these four women off the bus and summarily executed them because they were involved in democracy? A lot of naysayers thought, "Well, this is the end of democracy in Afghanistan." Three years—3 years time, 10 million citizens have said, "I want to be a part of freedom. I want to participate." Freedom is a powerful force in this world.

And we are better off and America is safer because we have an ally in the war on terror in Afghanistan. And we're safer the more freedom marches around the world. And we're safer when others see an example of what a free society is like. It's not easy work in Afghanistan. Listen, we had some troubles getting from point A to point B when it came to our own democracy. The Articles of Confederation weren't exactly a smooth-running period here in America. But Afghanistan is headed toward Presidential elections. It's amazing, when you think about it.

Third lesson, when we see a threat, we must deal with it before it fully materializes. That's one of the lessons of September the 11th. We must take threats seriously before they come to hurt us. We wouldn't have to say that prior to September the 11th. Prior

to September the 11th, when we saw a threat overseas, we could say, “Well, we’ll deal with it if we feel like it, and we may not, because we’re fine here at home. We’re safe.” We no longer have that safety anymore. That attack on September the 11th showed that we’re vulnerable, and therefore, when we see a threat, we must take it seriously before it materializes.

And so I saw a threat in Iraq. Iraq was a tough decision. I saw a threat—or my administration saw a threat—one, we saw intelligence that said weapons and the capability of making weapons. Secondly, we remembered he had used weapons. He’d actually used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. And he was a sworn enemy of America. He was a guy shooting at our pilots enforcing the world’s sanctions. He had terrorist ties. Remember Abu Nidal? He was the guy that killed Leon Klinghoffer. He was in Baghdad, and so was his organization. Zarqawi—he’s the person that beheads people in Iraq today—he was in and out of Baghdad, as was the people in his organization. He paid the families of suicide bombers. There’s terrorist ties. And of course the biggest threat is, somebody who could have the capability of making weapons of mass destruction or had weapons of mass destruction would pass that capability on to an enemy who would like to inflict more harm on us.

So I look at the intelligence and remember the history and went to the United States Congress and said, “This administration sees a threat. What do you all think?” And Members of the Congress from both political parties looked at the same intelligence we looked at, and they remembered the same history we remembered, and they concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force. My opponent looked at the very same intelligence I looked at, and when they said, “Do you authorize the use of force,” he voted “yes”.

Before the Commander in Chief commits troops into harm’s way, we must try all options. I’ve got to be able to say to the moms and dads and husbands and wives of our soldiers that I tried everything I can to deal with the threat before it fully materializes, in ways other than militarily. So I went to the United Nations. My hope was that we

could solve this problem diplomatically. I was hopeful that the free world might convince Saddam Hussein to come to his senses.

And so the U.N. debated the issue, and the U.N. Security Council voted 15 to nothing on a resolution that said to Saddam Hussein, “Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences.” I believe when international organizations speak, they better mean what they say, in order to make the world a more peaceful place. The world spoke.

He didn’t listen. As a matter of fact, he hadn’t listened for a decade. This was not the first resolution that the U.N. had passed. I think it was like number 17, if I’m not mistaken. I can’t remember the exact number. I believe it’s in double digits at least. In other words, they passed a resolution, he ignored; they passed, he ignored; they passed, he ignored, which only strengthened Saddam Hussein.

And so, at this point—and not only that, remember they sent the inspectors into Iraq, and as intelligence shows, he systematically deceived them. So I had a choice to make. And here’s the way I view the choice. Diplomacy had failed. We tried what we could do to convince him to disclose and disarm. Do I take the world of a madman and forget lessons of September the 11th, or do I take action to defend this country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time. *[Applause]*

Okay, hold on, we’ve got work here. We did not find the stockpiles we all thought were there. But we do know he had the capability of making those weapons and he had the capacity to pass that capability on to an enemy. And after September the 11th, that is a risk I believe our country could not afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. *[Applause]*

Okay, hold on a minute. Thank you all. A couple of other lessons learned. When we put our kids in harm’s way, they deserve the full support of the Federal Government. All of us in positions of responsibility must be able to say to our troops and loved ones, “We’re giving you what you need to do your job.” It’s a solemn duty of the Federal Government. That’s why I went to the Congress in September of last year and said, “Look,

we need \$87 billion for supplemental funding.” That would be funding for body armor and spare parts, ammunition, fuel, hazard pay, health benefits, that which is needed to support our troops in harm’s way—a legitimate request. More importantly, it was a necessary request.

And we got great support from members of both political parties. People understood that we have a duty at the Federal level to support our troops. The support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against funding for our troops, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Four Members of the United States Senate voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding the troops, and two of those four are my opponent and his runningmate. When asked about the vote, he said this: “I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it.” Now, I don’t know if they’re talking that way here in the town square of Blaine or not. I don’t think so. *[Laughter]* And they pressed him further, and he said he’s proud of the vote. He finally said, “The whole thing was a complicated matter.” There’s nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat. *[Applause]*

Okay. That bus is warming up. I’ve got some more I’ve got to say. Thank you all for the generous applause. I’ve got something else I want to tell you. We’re headed toward peace. I believe that liberty can transform societies for the better. That’s what I believe. The heart of my conviction is I believe that liberty is a transformational power. I believe that this is a theme throughout our history and throughout the history of the world. Think about this when you’re talking to your friends and neighbors about this campaign. Think about this when you’re thinking about a loved one who is serving in historic times now.

I sit at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi. We have a serious discussion. He is the Prime Minister of Japan. You know, my dad went to war against the Japanese, your dad and granddads did as well. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America, and it was a bloody conflict. And

after we won World War II, fortunately my predecessor Harry Truman and others in the United States believed that liberty could transform an enemy into a friend. And there was a lot of skeptics then. And you can understand why. We had just been to war. A lot of people’s lives were harmed as a result of that war. And so there were doubters as to whether or not liberty had the power to transform. But nevertheless, there was great faith in those days about the capacity of liberty. And they helped Japan—our predecessors helped Japan become a democracy. And as a result, I sit down at the table today, talking to Prime Minister Koizumi about keeping the peace we all want.

Think about that. Someday, someday, an American President is going to sit down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, talking about how to keep the peace. And our children and grandchildren will be better off for it. That’s what’s happening. That’s what you’re seeing right now. That’s what you’re seeing.

These are historic times. It’s essential that we have this great faith in the ability of liberty to transform the world. Those are the stakes in which we live. It’s a chance to really use our influence, with friends and allies, to lead toward a more peaceful world. And that’s why the American President must be clear in his thoughts, must not send mixed signals to the enemy or allies, must be firm in our resolve. You can’t chase the political winds. You’ve got to have an unshakable faith in the ability of liberty to transform the world for the better. And by remaining resolute and firm and strong, this world will be peaceful. And we can look back—this generation of Americans can look back and say, “The world was a better place, and our children and grandchildren have a better chance to grow up in a peaceful, peaceful world.”

Thank you all for coming. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. at the NSC Sports Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the Republican National Convention; former Representative Vin Weber of Minnesota; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; Debbie Kennedy, wife of Representative Mark Kennedy; Mayor Randy Kelly of St. Paul, MN; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Rochester, Minnesota*September 16, 2004***The President.** Thank you all.**Audience members.** Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!**The President.** Thank you all. That's what I'm here to tell you. I'm ready to serve this country for 4 more years. Thanks for coming. Rochester, Minnesota, is a fantastic city. I appreciate—I know something about it. You see, my mother is a trustee of the Mayo Clinic, and I'm still listening to my mother, after all these years. And she said, "When you get over to Rochester, you tell them to keep doing what they're doing, and Barbara Bush sends her best."

Thanks for coming out today. Today, as I traveled your State on the bus, I've been on the telephone getting updates on the devastation being caused by Hurricane Ivan in Florida and Alabama and parts of Mississippi and Louisiana. Federal teams are there to do everything possible to help the folks down there. I know all my fellow Americans join me in sending our prayers and concern for the families who lost loved ones and for those whose lives are being affected by this devastating storm.

I also want to express my sympathy and concern for the people just down the road in Austin, Minnesota, and the surrounding areas who have been affected by flash flooding there.

I've had a great day traveling your State—St. Cloud, Anoka, the Halloween capital of America—[laughter]—Blaine, Minnesota, and right here in Rochester. What a great way to spend a day. I kind of like to spend an afternoon in the ballpark. I also like coming to ask people for their vote, and that's what I'm doing here in the great State of Minnesota. I want your vote. I also want your help. I'm traveling on this bus to let people know that I'd like your help coming down the stretch in this campaign.

We have a duty in this country to vote. And I'd like you to go out and register your friends and neighbors to vote. Remind them we have an obligation in a free society to go to the polls. And when you're registering people, don't overlook discerning Democrats like Zell Miller. And after you get people reg-

istered to vote—and voting time is around the corner—get them headed to the polls, and tell them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

My only regret of today is that Laura is not traveling with me. When I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, just so long as I don't ever have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to her word. The American people in New York City got to see a compassionate, strong, fine First Lady in Laura Bush. Today I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back into office, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years.

I want to thank my friend Gil Gutknecht, the fine United States Congressman from this part of the world. I appreciate his service. I appreciate working with him to do what's right for our country. He's a stalwart friend, and he's a great Member of Congress.

Today I had the privilege of being on the bus with your Governor, Tim Pawlenty, who has done such a fine job for the people of Minnesota. I'm proud to work with United States Senator Norm Coleman. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. I want to thank the people running for office.

I want to thank the grassroots activists. You are the people who put up the signs and make the phone calls and do all the hard work and never get enough credit. I'm here to give you credit for what you have done and what you're going to do, as we're coming down the pike. There's no doubt in my mind, with your help, we will carry the great State of Minnesota.

I'm looking forward to this campaign. I like to get out amongst the people and tell people where I stand, what I believe, and where I'm going to lead this Nation for the next 4 years. I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. I went to Washington, DC, to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I didn't like a system that just shuffled kids through the schools, year after year, without learning the basics. So we raised standards. We measure early to solve problems before it's too late. We believe in